From: Dick Norman
To: Microsoft ATR
Date: 1/16/02 5:13pm
Subject: Microsoft Settlement

DOJ,

As a successful computer consultant for the past twenty years to numerous major corporations including IBM, Michelin, Arco, Deutsche Bank, and Fortune, I appreciate the opportunity to comment on the Microsoft Settlement.

Microsoft's success has been largely due to their ability to develop "best of breed" applications and to distribute and market those worldwide. Their success is also due to the strategic blunders of their competitors. From Novell to WordPerfect to Oracle to Netscape, each of these competitors (and many more) has failed miserably in critical areas of product design, marketing, or support. We have been led to believe that the government should protect these software vendors from their own incompetence. Here are just a few examples of what is a very long list.

WordPerfect failed to grasp the significance of the graphical user interfaces (GUI) used by the Macintosh and Windows. As a consequence, they were several years late to market with a Windows based product - a very costly blunder. Their market share fell from over 80 percent to well under 10 percent in the very important word processing / suite segment.

Novell once "owned" the file server market. They, like WordPerfect, hung on to their character based user interface. Recognizing this weakness Microsoft developed a competitive product which was so intuitive that server administrators rarely had to attend classes or refer to manuals. Novell still has a few "best of breed" features which are totally obscured by Microsoft's ease of use.

Oracle developed a very good database product. But their real strength was there marketing organization which recognized that Oracle needed to run on virtually every platform. Oracle has been very successful, but has started to lose large numbers of sales to Microsoft's SQL Server, which is considerably easier to install, configure, and use.

Netscape was initially one of the brightest stars in the Internet universe. Netscape virtually owned the Internet browser and server markets. Their browser and their web server were simply the best. But following their IPO, they had lots of money, which allowed them to go off in 20 different directions rather than focusing on their core business. As a Netscape business partner, I received a blizzard of mis-directions on where they were headed.

Microsoft's competitors would like the public to believe that it isn't

possible to be successful in the software industry today. But success
stories abound, both with large and small software companies. Visioneer's
PaperPort, IBM's VisualAge for Java, IBM's-ViaVoice gold, NetObjects Fusion
are just a few examples of "best of breed" software where Microsoft doesn't
dominate.

It is instructional to visit the software department of virtually any
computer store in the world where Microsoft enjoys less than ten percent of
the all important shelf-space - a key indicator in retailing.

Rather than being a predator, Microsoft has repeatedly capitalized on the
strategic blunders of other software companies. The software business, with
its very short product life cycles, is much like the stock market or the
crap table. You invest your money and take your best shot. If you lose, you
have no one to blame but yourself. I know. I have competed unsuccessfully
with Microsoft in several spaces.

Because I believe the lawsuit against Microsoft was nonsensical from the
beginning, I would like to have the Microsoft case settled - once and for
all.

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